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How Can Someone Who Lives in Insane Luxury be a Star in Today's World? by Ben Stein

For many years Ben Stein has written a biweekly column called "Monday Night at Morton's." (Morton's is a famous chain of Steakhouses known to be frequented by movie stars and famous people from around the globe.) Now, Ben is terminating the column to move on to other things in his life.

As I begin to write this, I "slug" it, as we writers say, which means I put a heading on top of the document to identify it. This heading is "eonlineFINAL," and it gives me a shiver to write it. I have been doing this column for so long that I cannot even recall when I started. I loved writing this column so much for so long I came to believe it would never end.

It worked well for a long time, but gradually, my changing as a person and the world's change have overtaken it. On a small scale, Morton's, while better than ever, no longer attracts as many stars as it used to. It still brings in the rich people in droves and definitely some stars. I saw Samuel L. Jackson there a few days ago, and we had a nice visit, and right before that, I saw and had a splendid talk with Warren Beatty in an elevator, in which we agreed that *Splendor in the Grass* was a super movie. But Morton's is not the star galaxy it once was, though it probably will be again.

Beyond that, a bigger change has happened. I no longer think Hollywood stars are terribly important. They are uniformly pleasant, friendly people, and they treat me better than I deserve to be treated. But a man or woman who makes a huge wage for memorizing

lines and reciting them in front of a camera is no longer my idea of a shining star we should all look up to.

How can a man or woman who makes an eight-figure wage and lives in insane luxury really be a star in today's world, if by a "star" we mean someone bright and powerful and attractive as a role model?

Real stars are not riding around in the backs of limousines or in Porsches or getting trained in yoga or Pilates and eating only raw fruit while they have Vietnamese girls do their nails. They can be interesting, nice people, but they are not heroes to me any longer. A real star is the soldier of the 4th Infantry Division who poked his head into a hole on a farm near Tikrit, Iraq.

He could have been met by a bomb or a hail of AK-47 bullets. Instead, he faced an abject Saddam Hussein and the gratitude of all of the decent people of the world. A real star is the U.S. soldier who was sent to disarm a bomb next to a road north of Baghdad. He approached it, and the bomb went off and killed him.

A real star, the kind who haunts my memory night and day, is the U.S. soldier in Baghdad who saw a little girl playing with a piece of unexploded ordnance on a street near where he was guarding a station. He pushed her aside and threw himself on it just as it exploded. He left a family desolate in California and a little girl alive in Baghdad.

The stars who deserve media attention are not the ones who have lavish weddings on TV but the ones who patrol the streets of Mosul even after two of their buddies were murdered and their bodies battered and stripped for the sin of trying to protect Iraqis from terrorists.

We put couples with incomes of \$100 million a year on the covers of our magazines. The noncoms and officers who barely scrape by on military pay but stand on guard in Afghanistan and Iraq and on ships and in submarines and near the Arctic Circle are anonymous as they live and die. I am no longer comfortable being a part of the system that has such poor values, and I do not want to perpetuate those values by pretending that who is eating at Morton's is a big subject.

There are plenty of other stars in the American firmament...the policemen and women who go off on patrol in South Central and have no idea if they will return alive; the orderlies and paramedics who bring in people who have been in terrible accidents and prepare them for surgery; the teachers and nurses who throw their whole spirits into caring for autistic children; the kind men and women who work in hospices and in cancer wards.

Think of each and every fireman who was running up the stairs at the World Trade Center as the towers began to collapse. Now you have my

idea of a real hero. I came to realize that life lived to help others is the only one that matters.

This is my highest and best use as a human. I can put it another way. Years ago, I realized I could never be as great an actor as Olivier or as good a comic as Steve Martin...or Martin Mull or Fred Willard—or as good an economist as Samuelson or Friedman or as good a writer as Fitzgerald. Or even remotely close to any of them.

But I could be a devoted father to my son, husband to my wife and, above all, a good son to the parents who had done so much for me. This came to be my main task in life. I did it moderately well with my son, pretty well with my wife and well indeed with my parents (with my sister's help). I cared for and paid attention to them in their declining years. I stayed with my father as he got sick, went into extremis and then into a coma and then entered immortality with my sister and me reading him the Psalms.

This was the only point at which my life touched the lives of the soldiers in Iraq or the firefighters in New York. I came to realize that life lived to help others is the only one that matters and that it is my duty... This is my highest and best use as a human.

Command Post Leadership: Finding Your Moral Compass by Harry R. Carter PhD., MIFireE. *Firehouse Magazine*. Reprinted from *Firehouse Magazine*, Copywrite March 2005.

As one who has studied leadership for a long time, I want you to know that I have worked very hard to accumulate a solid basis of theory for my writings. A great deal of my time has been devoted to reviewing the academic literature as it relates to the topic of leadership. I learned very quickly that there is a wealth of knowledge to be gained in this critical area of organizational development. For you see, without leaders, we are left without direction, guidance and motivation. Many of the people who write in academic journals go on for page after page, yet say nothing. That is a style I hope that I have avoided. However, they have placed an untold number of kernels of knowledge out there to pique the interest of the discerning reader.

I have specifically looked at some of the leading writers to see how they deliver their message, for I want to be sure that what I have to say is relevant to the early years of the 21st century. However, I do not want to lose contact with the precious elements that have formed the foundation for our organizations, and provided the cornerstone for the operational structures wherein we now work.

Warren Bennis has come to be one of my favorite researchers and writers. He has an excellent writing style, and always imparts decent knowledge. In a recent piece, he touched a responsive chord with me. In a discussion of leadership written for *Executive Excellence*, he makes a point upon which I would like to build this month's column. He states, "The process of becoming a leader is the same as becoming an integrated human being. Character counts more than any other single quality. Character has to do with our mental/moral attitude when we feel most active and alive." (Bennis, *Executive Excellence*, 1999.)

His thoughts are supported by the writings of Dr. William Cohen, a retired major general in the U.S. Air Force Reserve. In his book *The New Art of Leadership*, he covers important principles of leadership in combat scenarios, which he calls “the ‘worst-case’ condition of high risk.” (Cohen, *Executive Excellence*, 1999.) Cohen lists integrity as his first law of leadership and urges us to “maintain integrity by doing the right thing ... (for) without basic trust between leaders and followers, the leader will be ineffective.” (Cohen, *ibid.*)

Each time I teach a leadership course, I begin with some version of the following: “Think of the best leader for whom you ever worked. What is it that made that person great to your way of thinking?” Without fail, some form of the word character comes into the discussion very early on. Other words that follow are:

- Supportive
- Trusting
- Nurturing
- Reliable

It has been my experience that there is a critical element that lies at the heart of a good leader. It seems to be like a force that acts in an almost magnetic fashion to draw people towards them. They seem to have what I call a moral compass to guide them as they travel the dusty, bumpy road of leadership. Let me share a few thoughts on what I believe encompass the concept of this moral compass.

Let me now extract a few key points from my lesson plan on finding your moral compass: Integrity, Courage, Pride Faith, Persistence, Good Judgment, Tact, Unselfishness, Trust, Loyalty.

Integrity, trust and dependability all fall into the same basket. If leaders act in a manner that merits trust, the troops will respond and trust them. If they are consistent in their actions and support for their people, that trust will strengthen and grow. It is just that simple. This is the interaction that creates loyalty. People will demonstrate loyalty to those whose actions merit it.

The opposite is equally true. As a leader, you can never be perceived as the sort of person who lets the rug to be pulled from under your people. In some cases, you may even have to act as a shield between your troops and the powers that be. While that may seem to fly in the face of what a supervisor should do for the organization, I suggest that unless people are happy in their jobs, performance will suffer. Good leaders know this and they limit the amount of trouble that flows downhill toward their people. This can be hard on the leaders, but the results can be worthwhile.

There is another attribute to which you can aspire, but that cannot be taught to you. That attribute is courage. You can study famous heroes in history until the last day of your life, but not understand what it is to take a courageous action. Let me remind you that the need for courage is not limited to the fireground, although that is the most public venue for this important attribute.

Public heroism can be rewarding, and it is extremely important in the history of an organization. However, it is the day-in, day-out type of quiet heroism that can be the most satisfying. Fighting for a cause you believe in can be most satisfying. Fighting for this same cause in the face of organizational obstructions and discouragement can be quite a different matter.

Faith, pride, tact and good judgment are attributes that you must develop yourself. Each of us must come to believe in something other than ourselves. Once you have come to a personal knowledge of what you believe, live that belief and be consistent in your application of its tenets.

Pride is also a difficult phenomenon to engender. Pride can be a force for good as well as for evil. Remember the words of the Bible: “Pride goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall.” Very simply, pride can get in the way of good sense.

On the other hand, pride in something that is good and worthwhile can also create a level of loyalty beyond belief. This is the good pride, the strong pride that makes failure in front of your peers an unacceptable option. A properly generated aura of unit pride lies at the center of some of our greatest organizations.

Trust, character, knowledge and the others are just the starting point. A critical element within your moral compass will come from the degree to which you demonstrate persistence in pursuit of your organization’s vision, mission, goals and objectives. Think about the advice regarding perseverance that you have heard since you were a small child.

Thomas Palmer stated it best in 1840 when he wrote, “ ’Tis a lesson you should heed, try, try again, if at first you don’t succeed try, try again.” There is a great deal to be said for people who can keep their eyes on the prize. It takes a great deal of perseverance to push on toward that prize in the face of the many obstacles placed in their path by the organization, friends, family and coworkers.

I have met some really smart people who never did fully use their intelligence and education. They simply thought people should be impressed by the strength of their credentials, recognize their innate brilliance and bow to their wisdom. It does not work that way, gang. You have to earn your way in this world, and I want to assure you that it is rare to experience success during your first attempt. You must set your personal goals and commit your life to achieving them.

Aim high, because there is always going to be a bit of a falloff as you move down life’s road. But keep trying, my friends. Please keep trying.

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HOORAY!!!!!!!!!!!!

IT IS THAT TIME OF THE YEAR TO MARK YOUR CALENDARS FOR THE NEXT REGION 6 LEPC CONFERENCE...

The conference will be held in Little Rock, AR January 23-26, 2006 at the Double Tree Hotel. It will be hosted by the Pulaski County LEPC. Please start checking the LEPC Conference website www.hotzone.org periodically to receive updated information and details as they are confirmed. We look forward to seeing you there.

State Emergency Plans are Lacking by Julia Malone, Atlanta-Journal Constitution; June 26, 2005

When a chemical reaction at a manufacturing plant released a toxic plume over Dalton last year, emergency workers had no protective gear, no information on the possible effects of the fumes, and no way to know that evacuating residents might be a mistake. Dalton also didn't have a local emergency planning committee. Across the country, nearly every state has set up these groups to bring together emergency services, industry and citizens to examine local hazards and prepare for potential disasters.

Although Georgia ranks ninth in the nation in population and has thousands of facilities with toxic substances such as sulfuric acid, chlorine, and radioactive waste, only 21 of the state's 159 counties have organized local emergency planning committees. By comparison, South Carolina, with a population about half the size of Georgia's, has 46 local emergency planning committees listed on the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Web site. North Carolina has 97, one for almost every county.

The lag in Georgia dates to 1986, when Congress passed a law mandating the planning committees in response to the catastrophic leak at a Union Carbide plant in Bhopal, India. Almost every state chose to set the groups up by counties, townships or districts, but Georgia was one of only two states --- Oregon being the other --- that decided to set up one committee for the whole state.

After northwest Atlanta residents raised concerns about hazardous chemicals in rail cars and enlisted the aid of 5th District Rep. John Lewis, Georgia began allowing some counties, beginning with Fulton, to set up local committees. But the state has continued to take a relatively passive role. The absence of a local preparedness has become a factor for federal investigators looking into the 2004 incident in Dalton, an industrial center 80 miles north of Atlanta known as the "carpet capital of the world." Dalton and Whitfield County "didn't have a plan for what they would do in the event of a chemical release," Carolyn Merritt, chairman of the U.S. Chemical Safety and Hazard Board, said in an interview last week. Her independent agency is scheduled to issue a final report and recommendations in the fall on the leak of

triallyl cyanurate, which did not kill anyone but sent 154 people to the hospital to be decontaminated.

Merritt said that an active local emergency planning committee would have conducted drills that might have shown police that "in a circumstance like this," residents would be better protected if they close their windows and doors and "shelter-in-place" instead of leaving their homes. She expressed concern that Georgia has failed to establish a wide network of community planning teams.

Wait For Them To Call

Georgia officials balked at establishing the local committees at least partly because no federal money was included. "They decided it was an unfunded mandate," said Kent Howell, who oversees hazardous materials at the Georgia Department of Natural Resources. So two decades later, even in the industrialized Atlanta metro region, only Fulton, Fayette and Cobb counties have emergency planning committees. Among the counties that don't is Rockdale, where powdered chlorine caught fire at a BioLab warehouse and spewed noxious fumes over the region in May 2004. The fire took two days to extinguish, closed businesses in downtown Conyers and caused the evacuation of thousands of residents.

Having a group sit down regularly to plan for such emergencies "might not have stopped the incident," said Randy Howard, an official with the Georgia Office of Homeland Security. "But it could have made for a little bit more awareness. They might have done something different." Howard, as state coordinator for local emergency planning committees, said his agency has refocused on the committees as a way to strengthen security after the Sept. 11 terrorism attacks. He said he now can offer counties federal Department of Transportation funds for the \$4,000-\$9,000 costs for equipment and training. He hopes to have 14 more counties on board by year's end. But local officials have to seek him out first, he said.

Georgia Homeland Security Director Mike Sherberger confirmed that wait-for-them-to-call policy. "Our role is to provide technical support when a community wants to form an LEPC [local emergency planning committee]," he said. "I think we've got a pretty good record of growth. It's more of a local matter." That approach was criticized by Carol Williams, executive director of the Georgia activist group Environmental Community Action, who said that the failure of the state to establish these committees means that planning has been done only by emergency service officials. "The part that was left out was citizen participation," she said.

'There Is A Need'

Supporters of local emergency planning committees concede they are no cure-all. The EPA ordered a survey about five years ago and discovered that many of the panels, especially in low-risk rural areas, had become inactive. In large cities, public participation often drops off. In Atlanta, the committee's 40-50 members come chiefly from industry. "We have an underrepresentation in private individuals, elected officials and the news media," said Russell Baker, who heads the Fulton County emergency planning committee.

Despite last year's toxic release in Dalton, Whitfield County is not moving toward setting up a local emergency planning committee. "We have attempted to do it one, two or three times, and actually could never get the industry people interested," said Whitfield emergency management director and fire chief Carl Collins. "If the industry would participate like it's designed, it would be beneficial." At the facility where the leak occurred last year, J. Woodson Nader offered a different view. "We tried at MFG Chemical for several years to get [a local emergency planning committee] going," he said in a phone interview. "My understanding at that time was that the fire department and the county and city were all willing, but there was no money." In the aftermath of the recent incident, he said, "I would certainly agree there is a need for one."

Outside of Augusta, Columbia County official Pam Tucker has found alternative ways to finance her local emergency committee, one of most active in the state. Last week, she received a call from the California CEO of a manufacturing company that was fined \$35,000 for an environmental violation at a plant in her county. Instead of paying the federal government, the company is allowed to spend the money on EPA-approved expenses for her local emergency planning committee. So Tucker is making a list of chemical safety gear and emergency training expenses, all of which will be paid courtesy of industry.

* ON THE WEB: The Environmental Protection Agency posts a list of local emergency planning committees: www.epa.gov/ceppo/lepclist.htm

Emergency Numbers for Spill Reporting in Region 6

Arkansas Dept. of Emergency Management	800-322-4012
Louisiana State Police	877-925-6595
New Mexico State Police	505-827-9126
Oklahoma Dept. of Environmental Quality	800-522-0206
Texas Environmental Hotline	800-832-8224

National Response Center	800-424-8802
EPA Region 6	877-372-7745
CHEMTREC	800-424-9300

CAMEO CORNER

- 1) What chemical has “mix” somewhere in its chemical name, is an EPCRA EHS chemical, & is a colorless solid?
- 2) How many chemicals start with the number 17 in their UN/NA#, have corrosive in their DOT label, have the number 77 somewhere in their CAS#, & have a molecular weight greater than 92.5?
- 3) On August 17, 2004 a canister of Triethyl phosphate fell off of a truck shearing the valve & instantaneously releasing it's entire contents of 500 lbs. The buildings near the release are single storied with no shelter as it by a new residential area in Camden, AR. The wind speed is 18 mph from the West, the measurement height is 10 meters, in open country with a completely cloudy sky. The temperature is 97 degrees F, with 88% humidity & no inversion.
 - a) What is the downwind distance of the TEEL-1?
 - b) What is the release rate?

Answers:

- 1) Warfarin
- 2) 11
- 3) 1347 yards & 8.33 pounds/ sec

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We're on the Web!

See us at:

www.epa.gov/ceppo

The Following Counties In Region 6 Received Local Reimbursement Awards in May 2005:

Guymon, OK
Award Amount: \$15,702.50
Incident Type: Train Fire Involving Hazardous Substances

El Paso, TX
Award Amount: \$3,747.91
Incident Type: Abandoned Hazardous Substance

If A Dog Were Your Teacher!

You would learn stuff like...

- When loved ones come home, always run to greet them.
- Never pass up the opportunity to go for a joyride.
- Allow the experience of fresh air and the wind in your face to be pure ecstasy.
- When it's in your best interest, practice obedience.
- Let others know when they've invaded your territory.
- Take naps and stretch before rising.
- Run, romp, and play daily.
- Thrive on attention and let people touch you.
- Avoid biting, when a simple growl will do.
- On warm days, stop to lie on your back on the grass.
- On hot days, drink lots of water and lay under a shady tree.
- When you're happy, dance around and wag your entire body.
- No matter how often you're scolded, don't buy into the guilt thing and pout - run right back and make friends.
- Delight in the simple joy of a long walk.
- Eat with gusto and enthusiasm. Stop when you have had enough.
- Be loyal.
- Never pretend to be something you're not.
- If what you want lies buried, dig until you find it.
- And MOST of all...
- When someone is having a bad day, be silent, sit close by and nuzzle them gently.

Author unknown